

USPTO Customer No. 25280

Case 5218

RESPONSE**Rejection of Claims 1-18; 35 USC 112, second paragraph**

Claims 1-18 are rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential structural cooperative relationships of elements, such omission amounting to a gap between the necessary structural connections.

Independent claims 1 and 17 have been cancelled. Independent claim 6 has been amended to clarify the intended scope of the claim. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments are sufficient to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, and requests the withdrawal of the rejection.

Rejection of Claims 1-6; Double Patenting

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under the judicially created doctrine of double patenting. Claims 1-5 have been cancelled. Applicant respectfully requests leave to file an appropriate terminal disclaimer until such time as the remaining claim is otherwise deemed in condition for allowance, should the double patenting rejection still stand after entry of the present amendment.

Rejection of Claims 1-18; 35 USC 102(b)

Claims 1-18 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Johnson et al. (US Patent 5,669,632).

In the Office Action dated February 25, 2003, the Examiner states: "The invention of Johnson et al. is concerned with the internal tethers that are connected to a driver's side air bag, which is composed of one or two members, which the Examiner is equating to be the same as Applicant's 'bag panels'." Applicant respectfully submits that the tethers of Johnson et al. (30, 32) are not equivalent to Applicant's tether segments. In the embodiment shown in FIG.3, the tethers of Johnson et al. are attached along their central portions to the front bag panel of the air bag. The end portions of the Johnson

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tethers are then connected to the mouth of the air bag (that is, at the opening for the inflation media). This is described in Column 2, lines 50-64 of the '632 reference.

Applicant's invention includes using a plurality of tether segments to create a tether "system" that is then attached to both the front and rear panels of the air bag. Accordingly, Applicant's tether segments are connected at one end portion to the central region of a bag panel and at the other end portion to a corresponding tether segment attached to an opposing bag panel. Johnson et al. do not teach, nor suggest, the use of a pair of corresponding tether components attached to both the front and rear bag panels and to each other.

To illustrate this point, Applicant would like to make a comparison between **FIGS. 2 and 3** of Johnson et al. and **FIG. 5** of the subject application. The **Figures** of Johnson et al. show a multi-spoke tether in which the tether comprises one or two tether components. Applicant also discloses a multi-spoke tether system in **FIG. 5**. However, in the case of Applicant's invention, four tether segments are used to make a tether system that is attached to the front bag panel. An additional four tether segments are also attached to the rear bag panel. The tether segments of each tether system are then attached to one another to create a complete tether unit.

Finally, Applicant's invention utilizes a circular seam to distribute the concentration of stress on the tether during bag inflation. Johnson et al. describe a substantially linear seam. Applicant's circular seam crosses the yarns of the tether segments in a curvilinear fashion, rather than crossing along one line of the fabric as would be the result if Johnson et al.'s straight seam were used.

Applicant submits that Johnson et al. fails to teach the use of corresponding and cooperative tether segments that are attached to both front and rear bag panels and to each other; the use of segments cut in alignment with fabric warp or fill; and the use of a circular seam to distribute inflation stresses. For these reasons, Applicant believes that the rejection of the present claims is improper and respectfully requests the withdrawal of such rejection.

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CONCLUSION

This response is accompanied by a Formal Request for Extension of Time (three months) and a duplicate thereof.

Having amended the Claims and having addressed the Examiner's rejections, Applicant now respectfully submits that this case is in condition for allowance. Entry of this Amendment and issuance of a Formal Notice of Allowance is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence, along with a Request for Extension of Time (and duplicate thereof), are being transmitted by facsimile to Commissioner of Patents, Post Office Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 at (703) 873-9310 on August 25, 2003.



Charlotte C. Wilson
Agent for Applicant